

Ministry of Education

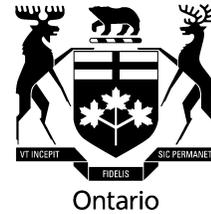
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May 17, 2012

Dear Chair,

I am writing to invite all school board Chairs and Directors of Education to participate in a conference call to begin a consultation on school boards restructuring and amalgamation with a view to the long-term sustainability of our publicly funded education system. As you know, the 2012 Ontario Budget indicated that following consultation, the Ministry of Education will work with boards and their communities to ensure that student needs are put first in any amalgamation.

I will be chairing this teleconference with Deputy Minister George Zegarac on Tuesday, May 29 at 3:30 p.m. To access the teleconference, please dial 1-855-340-1607 and enter the access code 8975220.

In light of our shared fiscal reality, the Ministry of Education, like all other ministries, has had to find areas of significant savings. Our choice is to protect the gains we have made together in student achievement and in the classroom experience. This includes the rollout of full-day kindergarten, smaller class sizes and preserving 20,000 teaching and support staff jobs.

Finding greater efficiencies in how we deliver education will help to achieve our fiscal targets. We have an opportunity to be creative and innovative as we work together to ensure that student needs are met.

Before I outline the process moving forward, I want to make it clear that at no point are we looking to merge separate and public boards or French and English boards. Also, it is important that this approach be different from the last time the Ministry of Education amalgamated boards in the late 1990s. On our teleconference, I welcome the opportunity to discuss the lessons learned from previous amalgamation efforts, and talk about how we can work together to develop our plan moving forward.

Some of you may know that in my previous role as Minister of Children and Youth Services, I worked closely with Deputy Zegarac and our partners in the child welfare sector to find opportunities and efficiencies. Children's Aid Societies worked to find creative partnerships and innovative approaches that not only saved money, but meant better care for kids. That is the approach we would like to take here.

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The 2012 Ontario Budget included a target of \$10.5 million in system savings for fiscal 2013-14 and \$16.7 million for fiscal 2014-15. By working together, we can develop a plan that meets these savings while considering ideas and sharing insights on best practice for the future sustainability of our education system.

We need to move quickly to meet the 2013-14 target but it is equally important to involve you in the process and to get it right. As such, I have asked Deputy Zegarac and ministry staff to begin sector consultations with your board staff in June. Your staff will receive more information regarding these discussions under a separate cover. As well, more detailed discussions with board chairs, trustees, teacher federations and other partners will follow throughout the summer.

Our intent is to develop a strategy based on what we learn through consultation and bring the strategy back to you for your consideration before the end of September 2012. The goal is to finalize the restructuring plans no later than early in 2013.

While I have been clear that we have no intention of restructuring across the existing boundaries of faith or language, I still encourage you to continue the work you have been doing to find efficiencies in consolidating back-office activities. This work is also critical because it helps ensure the best value for every dollar spent in education.

I know that by working together in the same spirit of partnership that has served us well in the past we can find the efficiencies we need for the long term, while continuing to meet student needs and strengthen publicly funded education in Ontario. We owe it to the students to continue to put their interests first as we work together.

Yours truly,



Laurel Broten
Minister

c: Directors of Education
Council of Ontario Directors of Education